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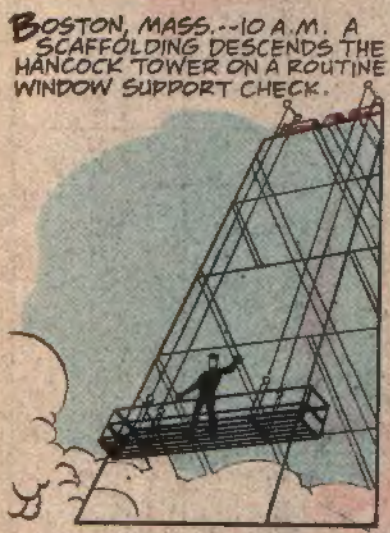
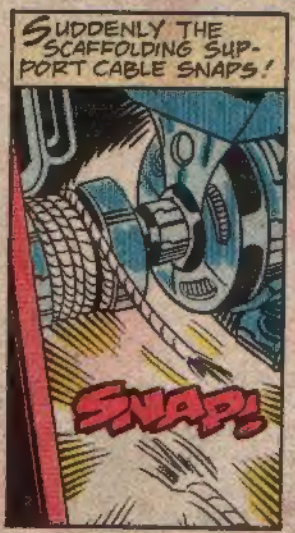
03
CREATED BY
MARTIN L. GREIM

PROLOGUE

SUPER-HERO COMING!
WHAT MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD HAS NOT DREAMED, AT LEAST ONCE, OF BEING A SUPERHERO--POSSESSED WITH POWERS FAR BEYOND THAT OF MORTAL MAN...
BOBBY CASWELL HAD JUST SUCH A DREAM, AND THAT DREAM CAME TRUE... SORT OF!





CHARLTON BULLSEYE Vol 2, No. 6, March, 1982.
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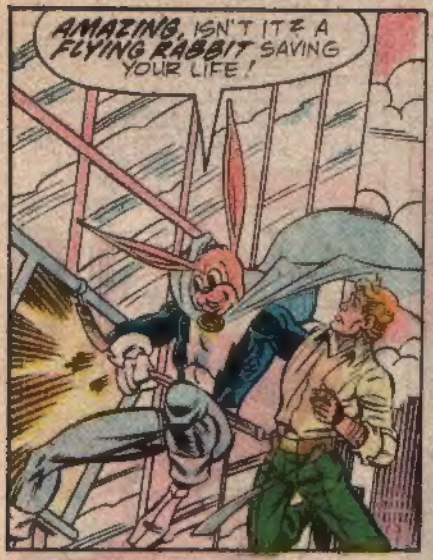
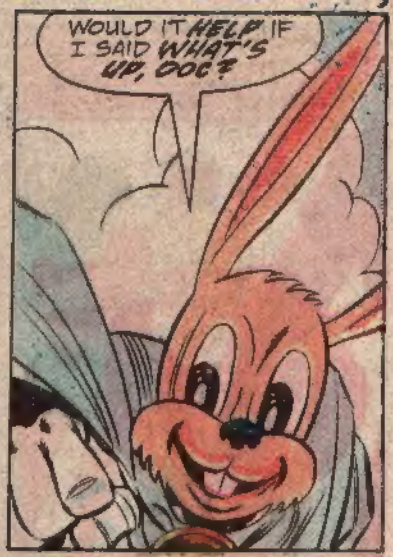
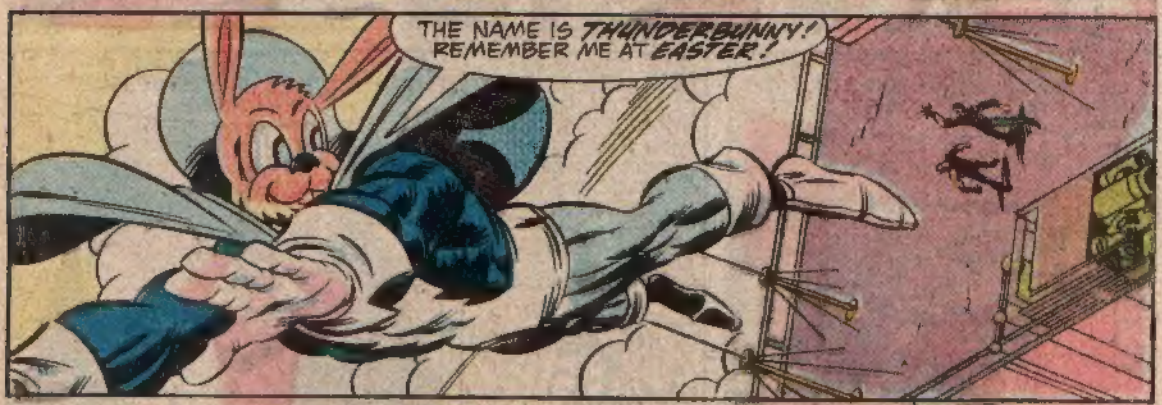
WINDS BUFFET THE SCAFFOLDING AGAINST THE BUILDING AS THE WORKMAN CLINGS FOR HIS LIFE.
WHAT'S THAT BELOW? IT'S FLYING UP HERE! IT'S--IT'S--
...A RABBIT?!
Thunder-bunny
CREATED & WRITTEN BY: MARTIN L. GREEN
ARTWORK BY: MIKE MACHLAN
INKS BY: VIKTOR KAGELO
LETTERING BY: PETE IRO
©1981 MARTIN L. GREEN
The SOUND of THUNDER

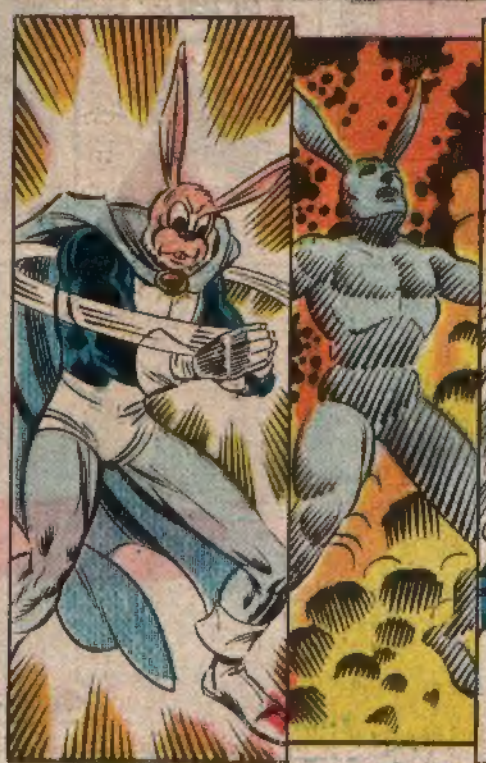

AMAZING, ISN'T IT? A FLYING RABBIT SAVING YOUR LIFE!

THE WORKER REJOINS HIS PARTNER ON THE BUILDING'S ROOF.
AHH-ABBA-AHH!


WOULD IT HELP IF I SAID WHAT'S UP, DOC?

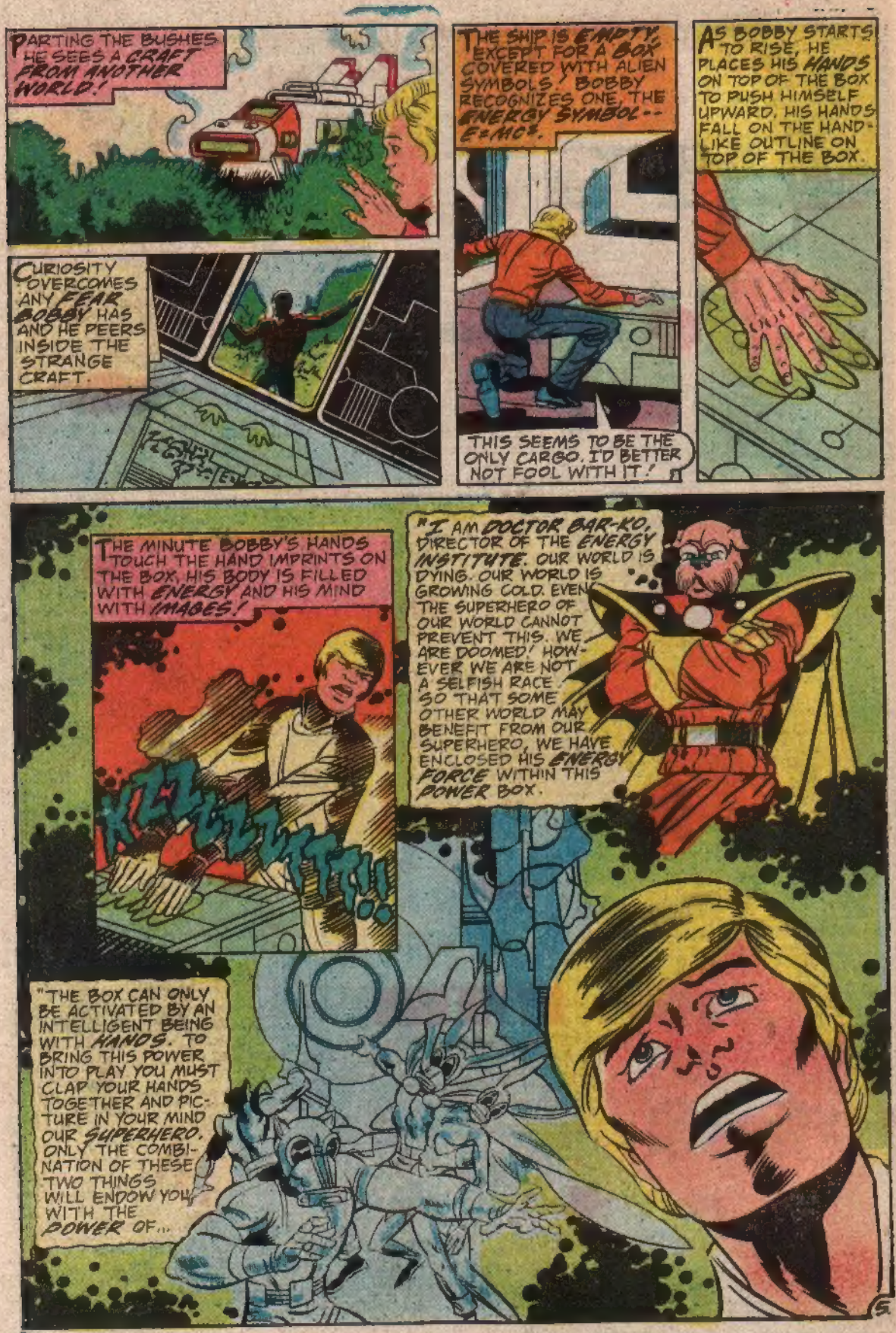

THE NAME IS THUNDERBUNNY! REMEMBER ME AT EASTER!

LANDING IN A SECLUDED ALLEY...

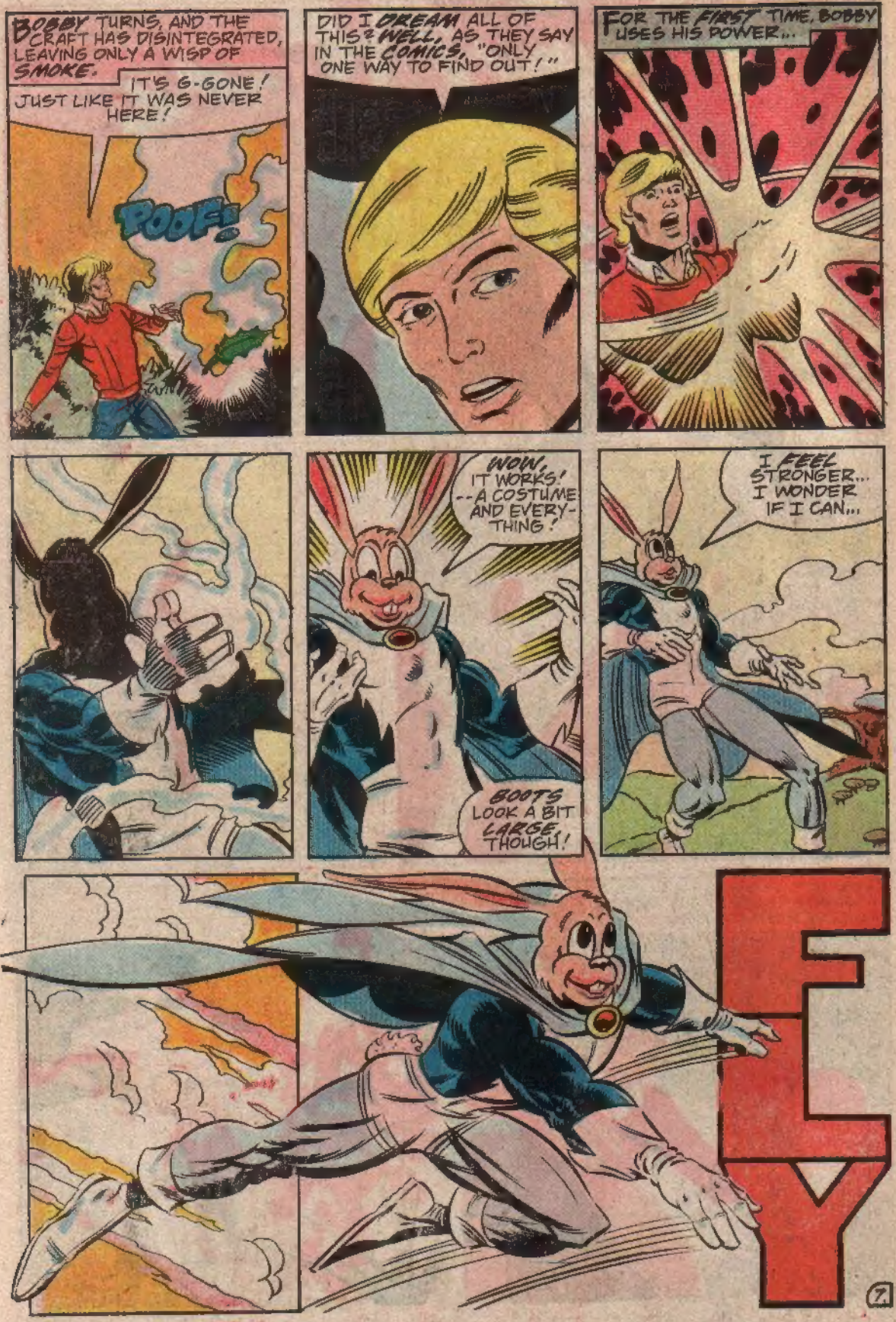


...THUNDERBUNNY BECOMES BOBBY CASWELL ONCE AGAIN...

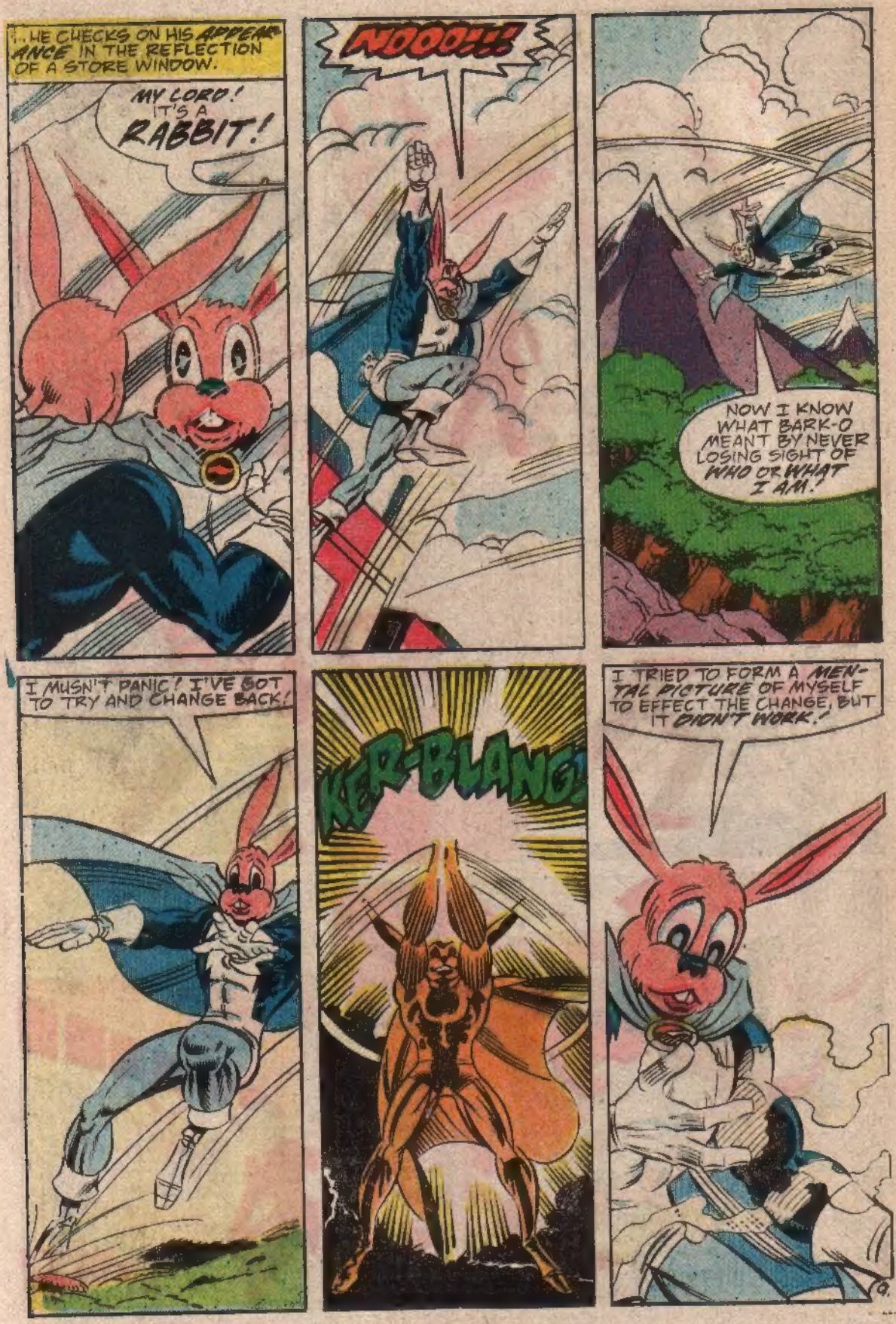
AS BOBBY HEADS HOME, HIS THOUGHTS RETURN TO THE TIME HE ACQUIRED HIS AMAZING POWERS.
RUTLAND, VERMONT, SUMMER OF '80. IT'S EARLY MORNING AS BOBBY ENJOYS HIS FAVORITE PASTIME—READING COMICS!
PAUSING IN HIS READING, HE GLANCES OUT AT THE EARLY MORNING SKY...
WOW! THAT'S NO FALLING STAR! WHATEVER IT IS CAME DOWN ON BALD MOUNTAIN!
WHEN UNCLE AL RENTED THIS PLACE FOR THE SUMMER I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE A U.F.O.!
GEE, NO ONE ELSE IS COMING TO FIND IT! IT CAME DOWN SO FAST, I GUESS YOU HAD TO BE LOOKING UP AT JUST THAT MOMENT TO SEE IT!
DARN! I WAS SO SURE IT CAME DOWN SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE!
I WAS RIGHT!
THERE IT IS!
4

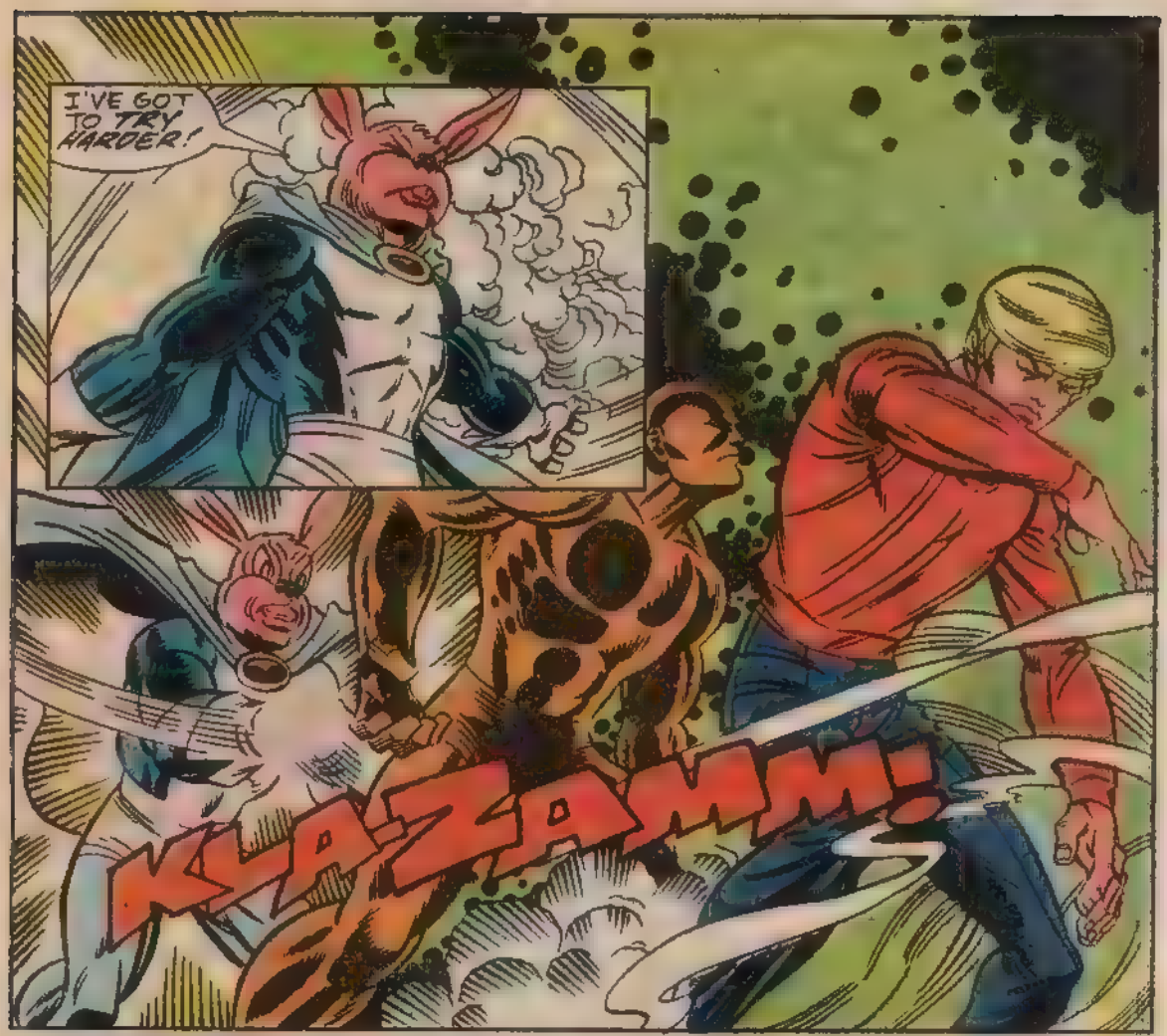

PARTING THE BUSHES HE SEES A CRAFT FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
CURIOSITY OVERCOMES ANY FEAR BOBBY HAS AND HE PEERS INSIDE THE STRANGE CRAFT.
THE SHIP IS EMPTY, EXCEPT FOR A BOX COVERED WITH ALIEN SYMBOLS. BOBBY RECOGNIZES ONE, THE ENERGY SYMBOL -- E=MC².
THIS SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY CARGO. I'D BETTER NOT FOOL WITH IT!
AS BOBBY STARTS TO RISE, HE PLACES HIS HANDS ON TOP OF THE BOX TO PUSH HIMSELF UPWARD. HIS HANDS FALL ON THE HAND-LIKE OUTLINE ON TOP OF THE BOX.
THE MINUTE BOBBY'S HANDS TOUCH THE HAND IMPRINTS ON THE BOX, HIS BODY IS FILLED WITH ENERGY AND HIS MIND WITH IMAGES!
KZZZZZZT!!
"I AM DOCTOR BAR-KO, DIRECTOR OF THE ENERGY INSTITUTE. OUR WORLD IS DYING. OUR WORLD IS GROWING COLD. EVEN THE SUPERHERO OF OUR WORLD CANNOT PREVENT THIS. WE ARE DOOMED! HOWEVER WE ARE NOT A SELFISH RACE. SO THAT SOME OTHER WORLD MAY BENEFIT FROM OUR SUPERHERO, WE HAVE ENCLOSED HIS ENERGY FORCE WITHIN THIS POWER BOX.
"THE BOX CAN ONLY BE ACTIVATED BY AN INTELLIGENT BEING WITH HANDS. TO BRING THIS POWER INTO PLAY YOU MUST CLAP YOUR HANDS TOGETHER AND PICTURE IN YOUR MIND OUR SUPERHERO. ONLY THE COMBINATION OF THESE TWO THINGS WILL ENDOW YOU WITH THE POWER OF...

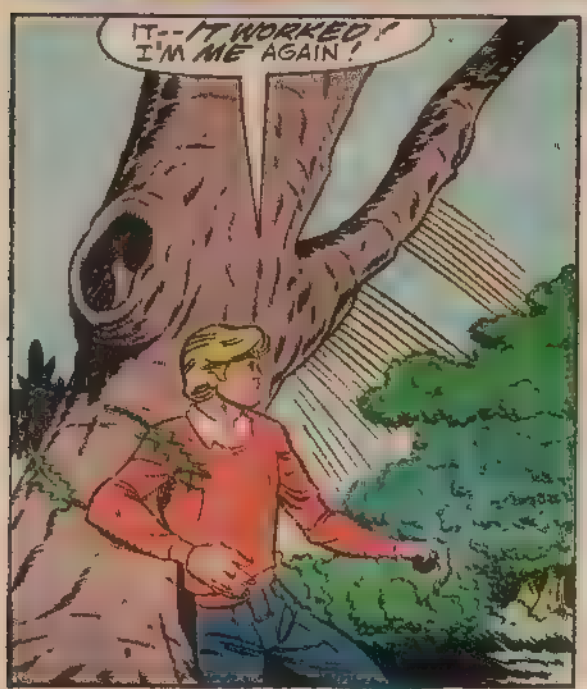
THUNDERBUNNY!
"YOU WILL NEVER FORGET THE IMAGE OF THE HERO JUST PROJECTED INTO YOUR MIND."
...BUT BEWARE, THERE IS A DANGER WITH THIS POWER!
THE LONGER YOU KEEP THE FORM OF A SUPER-HERO, THE HARDER IT WILL BE TO CHANGE BACK TO YOUR NORMAL SELF. TO DO THIS, YOU MUST CREATE A CLEAR MENTAL PICTURE OF YOURSELF...
AND AGAIN CLAP YOUR HANDS!
"YOU NOW POSSESS THE POWER OF OUR GREATEST HERO, BUT NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF WHO OR WHAT YOU REALLY ARE!"
OH, WOW! I--I DON'T BELIEVE IT, I JUST DON'T BELIEVE IT.

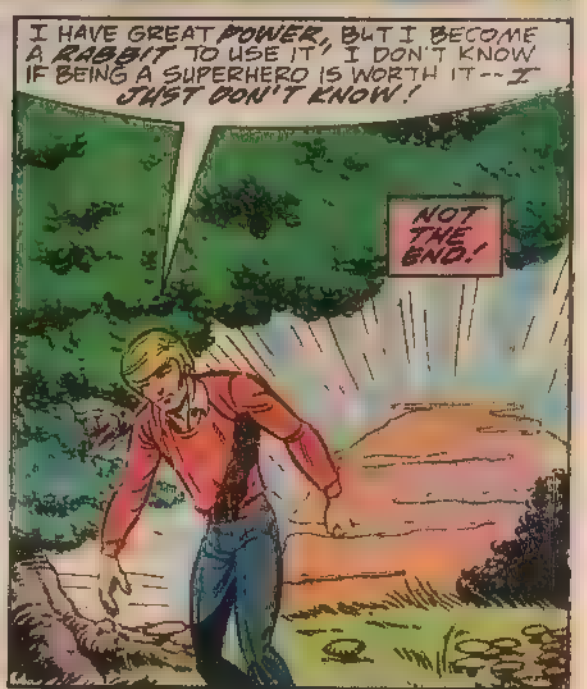

BOBBY TURNS, AND THE CRAFT HAS DISINTEGRATED, LEAVING ONLY A WISP OF SMOKE.
IT'S G-GONE! JUST LIKE IT WAS NEVER HERE!
POOF!
DID I DREAM ALL OF THIS? WELL, AS THEY SAY IN THE COMICS, "ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT!"
FOR THE FIRST TIME, BOBBY USES HIS POWER...
WOW, IT WORKS! --A COSTUME AND EVERY-THING!
BOOTS LOOK A BIT LARGE THOUGH!
I FEEL STRONGER... I WONDER IF I CAN...
FLY

UNAWARE HE IS NOW A RABBIT BOBBY FLIES TO RUTLAND CENTER AND OBSERVES A ROBBERY IN PROGRESS!
IT'S ALRIGHT, MA'AM! I KNOW YOU'RE SURPRISED TO SEE A SUPERHERO, BUT I'M HERE TO HELP!
OUT OF THE WAY, YOU!
AL BANK
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MADE UP FOR, BUT MOVE IT!
WHAP
AARRGH! HE'S LIKE STEEL!
BLAST HIM!
BANG
THAM
UNHURT, THUNDERBUNNY STEPS BACK AND DOES WHAT ANY BOY OF BOBBY'S AGE WOULD DO AFTER RECEIVING A COSTUME AND SUPERPOWERS...
PO
8.


...HE CHECKS ON HIS APPEARANCE IN THE REFLECTION OF A STORE WINDOW.
MY LORD! IT'S A RABBIT!
NOOO!!!
NOW I KNOW WHAT BARK-O MEANT BY NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF WHO OR WHAT I AM!
I MUSN'T PANIC! I'VE GOT TO TRY AND CHANGE BACK!
KER-BLANG!
I TRIED TO FORM A MENTAL PICTURE OF MYSELF TO EFFECT THE CHANGE, BUT IT DIDN'T WORK!


I'VE GOT TO TRY HARDER!
KLA-ZAMM!


IT--IT WORKED! I'M ME AGAIN!


I HAVE GREAT POWER, BUT I BECOME A RABBIT TO USE IT! I DON'T KNOW IF BEING A SUPERHERO IS WORTH IT--I JUST DON'T KNOW!
NOT THE END!

LETTERS

*****

Last month I went to the newsstand and received a shock. *Charlton Bullseye*? A funny animal comic?!? I figured nobody made funny animal comics anymore that aren't reprints. I figured I would buy it to have something to show my friends after the magazine failed.

Then I received an even greater shock! This comic was *GOOD!* Although Cap'n Catnip was fair as *FA* stories go and Neil the Horse took time out to sing a song (please don't do it again), Jack Bunny was great! Both story and art were superb! I can't praise it enough!

No. 3 I had no intention of buying until I saw it. I did a double take when I saw the cover. I thought maybe it was a John Byrne reprint from one of your old magazines. Although none of the stories were very good, the art was great except for "Duel in the Stars." (Sorry guys, but you can't win 'em all!) Another complaint is in "Prophecy of Doom" the panel borders were too irregular or they weren't present at all. "Mission" was good in art, but the end of the story was lousy. Michael Grace should have more art in the future. "Cavern of the Brain Eaters" ... Again, the ending was bad. (None of these stories had enough space to fully develop.) The art was very different ... Not bad, in fact, I loved it. More by him in the future too, please.

I notice that you aren't approved by the comics code. Could you do some horror stories like maybe H.P. Lovecraft? Gary Wray would be perfect for it. Do it like EC used to.

I regret that I didn't buy issue 1. Thought it was reprints.

Where do you dig up the talent? I detect foreign spellings. Give a little background on the contributors.

I know earlier in the letter I sounded very critical, but I must tell you that I enjoyed 2 and 3 immensely. You put out some quality stuff. But I'm worried that you might be cancelled due to lack of exposure. What do the sales reports say?

Thanks for a great comic,
Craig Fleschko
Janesville, WI

We may not be approved by the comics code, but don't expect to see any naughty, gory bits in these pages. We're capable of maintaining acceptable standards on our own, and have no intention of presenting offensive or 'adult' material. (Most so-called adult material is actually pretty juvenile, as we all know, but we'd rather stick with you crazy kiddies!)

By the way, sales reports are encouraging. Would you rascals really buy an issue every month???

*****

Very many thanks for the first Blue Beetle/Question story for 13 years in Bullseye No. 1. It's like a dream come true to see Charlton turn out an all new comic like this again. I enjoyed the story very much, not like the old Ditko series but I enjoyed it all the same. I must admit I'm not really looking forward very much to issue No. 2 (Funny animals??). However I am looking forward & hoping to see Thunderbolt, Judo Master, Peacemaker & most of all Captain Atom in all new stories in upcoming issues of Bullseye.

Ashley J. Simmons
Merseyside, England

*****

Issue #2 of your publishing experiment was more enjoyable than #1 for the simple reason that there are lots of good superheroes around (and thus the Blue Beetle and the Question were up against stiff competition) but there are precious few funny animals of any description in comic books today (save those in the Disney/Warner mold). Also, the variety provided by having three stories was a nice change from the full-lengther in #1.

You chose the proper story to feature on the cover, since Cap'n Catnip & Womble was clearly the superior story in this edition. Writer John Leasure showed a good appreciation for the fact that he was ripping off a basic super-hero format and turned this to his advantage by working it into the storyline. There was a nice offhandedness with the jokes with some of the running ones, such as the nature of Womble's species, being effective. The main criticism is that the plot lacked clarity and direction, and seemed to be a bit rushed, not to mention abruptly ended. Artist Tim Fuller showed a good grasp of his characters, giving each one appropriate expressions and postures.

Mark Armstrong's Jack Bunny was better on the pictures than on the words. His figures were subtly bizarre and he has a nice flair for the action scenes involving the rocket. The plot was farfetched, even for a funny animal story, but ultimately not crucial — except to provide a nice punchline at the end.

Did I mention bizarre artwork? Well, Am Saba's Neil the Horse takes the prize in that category for this issue. Not to mention the one for bizarre scripts. (The Soft Universe?) I'm too confused to say any more.

How about an all-duck issue? (Is that the editor I hear foaming at the mouth?)

"T.M. Maple"
Toronto, Canada

What's confusing about a soft universe? You're probably one of those rigid hard universe people who like to make trouble for editors and ducks. (Two of the softest soft universe examples I can imagine, right off the top of my head.)

*****

My friend and I have made up a superhero called "Mutation" and we think he is a good character for a comic series. We would like to know if you are interested in printing it. If so we would like to be made the permanent writers. We have the basic sketch if you would like to get a copy, please let us know. We are anxiously awaiting a reply.

Mr. Devont Mahaka,
Mr. Kevin Khelawan
Trinidad, West Indies

Serious answer coming up: Please don't send us sketches of characters or story ideas. We do not have a staff and we do not have a budget to develop properties. All we can do is make minor technical corrections on *finished work* to enable it to go through the several steps it takes to end up in a printed comic.

*****

I would like to tell you that, in my opinion, *Bullseye* is one of the finest overground books on the market.

I am an afficianado of underground, alternate, and the far-fringe newave comix, and I very rarely, if ever, buy overground comics. Your book is the sole exception.

I have been familiar with Tim Fuller's art from his self-published *Hooha Comics & Stories*, and to see his work on the cover of *Bullseye* #2 was a welcome surprise.

Whatever you do, *please* don't ax this book. It's almost *too good*.

I would like to see this book more widely distributed. So far, the only place I've seen it is a comic book store at a flea market in New Brunswick. Also, try to keep the cover art as top-notch as possible. Many comics (and comix) have died out because they looked "too commercial" (flat & superficial).

Steven Scharff
Hillside, NJ

We would like to see *Bullseye* more widely distributed too. But then we'd probably attract big money advertisers who would demand flat, superficial covers and slicker commercial stories. Hard to maintain a proper balance, you know. (Famous tightrope walker saying)

*****

Bravo! Good job! After plunking down my hard-earned fifty cents, I then said to myself, "Charlton, I'll give you one last chance!" Much to my surprise, you finally got it together.

How do you like "BULLSEYE BULLETINS" for the name of the letters page?

Greg Mattson
Wiscasset, ME

We'll think about it.

*****

About the first three issues of C. BULLSEYE — they do provide a good place for the aspiring amateur artist. The art in #1 was its sole merit — this Dan Reed's good. I'd hire him if I ran a comics group. About #2 — cute. On #3 — we see some good work. Ian Carr's work on the Grunder story is delightfully Colanesque . . . perhaps Marvel could grab him for a revival of DRACULA LIVES. Michael Grace ("Mission") draws like Mike Golden, but does better on the job of making the humans look human. Gary Wray obviously loves old EC comics; his "Brain-Eaters" tale can be mistaken for an EC story (or *Alien*). Can't say much about "Duel in the Stars" — the creative crew needs the same art & writing teachers I do!

On the letters: I must say you have an original lettercol title. I'd figure you'd go with "Charlton on Target". Anyway, I accept any genre for publication — superhero, funny animal, sci-fi, barbarian, sitcom, adventure, romance, detective, horror, mystery . . . even cross-genre, like maybe kung-fu funny animal superhero sitcom horror ... anything, as long as it's good.

Good luck on BULLSEYE. May it last long enough for me to get a work published!

John Saponaro
Brooklyn, N.Y.

AND MORE LETTERS

Your Charlton BULLSEYE #2 was marvelous. There really is nowhere to find a good funny animal comic anymore these days.

All three stories were great, but my favorite was Arn Saba's NEIL THE HORSE. I could easily imagine it as an animated cartoon.

I hope this funny animal comic will not be just a one shot, and that we can look forward to more NEIL THE HORSE. It's rare to find a comic that both me and my 10 year old daughter agree on — we think it's refreshing and delightful!

Trina Robbins
San Francisco, CA

It's particularly encouraging to receive a vote of confidence from a professional cartoonist like yourself, Trina. Hope you both like this issue too!

*****

Vanguards sounds terrific! I can hardly wait. I'm sorry you are only bi-monthly but I'm glad you're playing it safe. Atlas came out with a million titles in the mid-seventies, and ultimately WENT out with a million titles. Big mistake. By the way, I agree that some "Funny Animal" strips are excellent, but you fail to realize that the best of these take *themselves* seriously. That way they don't need to live from joke to joke.

Keep the lettercol open, since it may be *Bullseye*'s greatest asset. By the way again, I'd like to put forth my opinion on all these proposed revivals. Charlton had to cancel *all* these magazines, correct? I've read one Captain Atom in my life and I didn't care for it. The Blue Beetle and Question have never excited me. I suggest that you really need a completely new idea, and I think the *Vanguards* may be it — your *X-Men*. If you *are* going to do revivals, don't merely revive old failures. Think up new ways to do them and make them exciting! If Marv Wolfman had merely "revived" the Teen Titans, I doubt that they would have lasted as long as they already have. If Claremont and Cockrum had merely "revived" the X-Men ... well, there you go.

Stephen Gawronski
Schererville, IN

The world is a very complex and disorderly place, as you will discover upon life's journey, and very little along the way is as obvious as it might seem on the surface. Your version of the ideal situation in which to create new characters does not exist at this time in this company. We're doing the best we can with the facilities we have.

The fact is, dreaming up new characters is not very difficult. Some of our younger readers send us designs for dozens of them at a time. But it takes a mammoth effort in time, money and labor to establish a new title nationwide. The competition is stiff, so the writing, art, and all other elements have to be exceptional just to survive the first few issues without losing several thousand dollars.

Our publisher's instincts were against an anthology title, but so far we're holding our own. The *Vanguards* won't be Charlton's *X-Men*, though, because they and the universe in which they exist belong to Larry Houston.

*****

I think the only comics you should make are ghostly comics. They are number one!!

Do you get any other letters from people besides ... me?!? And do you think that I'm the biggest fan of 1981!?

Michael A. Rogers
Hubbardsville, NY

I don't know ... we've seen some pretty big fans.

*****

Issue #2 was an unqualified delight. Here we have three tales of striking variety in style and story, populated by creatures of all shapes and sizes — and no ducks! (Thank you, Mr. Pearson.) I don't know about the kids, or other older fans like myself (I'm 25), but each story had me smiling and (blush) even gigging, and I can't be confused with having a funny animal fetish. The greatest compliment that I can pay the folks responsible is to write that I'd love to see more stories with these characters. (Hey! Tim Fuller and John Leasure! How about a Wombie solo story? That ra— er gerbil's a natural.) My hat is off to the editor again, for a shrewd selection of stories with sharply different and splendid artwork. Final kudos go to the colorist (Wendy Flore?) for valiant work on what must have been tricky assignments, especially on the latter two stories.

One suggestion: I'd really appreciate brief bios (perhaps on the letters page) telling us a bit about the writers and artists behind the stories. In most cases, I drew a blank on them, save for Tim Fuller, whom I recognize from the fan press. Perhaps the artists could even provide some simple self-portraits. It's good to know a bit about the folks spinning their four-color wonders.

Thank you. And remember: I'm not a rat! I'm not a mouse! I'm not even a gerbil! I'm a comics fan! (Even if I am a trifle old, Mom.)

Joe Pilla
Yonkers, NY

*****

The MITEY BUGGERS story in this issue was written and illustrated by Alan Hanley, who was developing a whole series for us, based on these and many other characters, before he was killed in a tragic automobile accident.

We were eager to see what Alan could come up with, since we were familiar with his work over the years in many superior fanzines, including those he published himself. Without doubt, his stories would have proven even more successful in the four color format of the BULLSEYE.

Beyond the unmeasurable loss to his family is the loss for us all of this talented man.

Suggestions for future issues:

E-MAN, Captain Atom, a new Hercules story (I'm mad that you cancelled Charlton Classics), Thor, Vanguards, a new Fightin' Five story, Secret Romance, More Science Fiction, a Wombie/Jack Bunny double feature issue, Blue Beetle, Question, Creepy Things, and a reprint of Marvels Of Science #1 (the very FIRST Charlton comic!)

Randy Paske
Gilbert, MN

P.S. Suggestion for your letters page title: CHARLTON COMMENT

We'll think about it.

*****

Bullseye #2 was great!! I cannot commend it too highly. Arn Saba's Neil The Horse was thoroughly entertaining and Leasure and Fuller's Capt. Catnip put me in stitches. But by far the most accomplished piece was Mark Armstrong's Rocket Rabbit. This was one of the most professionally written and drawn funny animal stories it has been my pleasure to read in a long time. Only Paul Murry (Whitman) has a better grasp, in my opinion, of the intricacies involved in making a good funny animal story. Armstrong is a professional in every sense of the world.

I have always enjoyed funny animal comics. Bullseye #2 is one of the best.

Albert Temple
Concord, CA

P.S. Can this mean the return of Atomic Mouse? If Neal Adams won't draw it, maybe you'll let me try. Let me know, O.K.?

Atomic Mouse, for those of you who don't know, was an early Charlton character of the Funny Animal persuasion who resembled a more famous Mouse, surnamed Mighty, who has also retired, as far as we can determine. This issue's *Mucha Mouse* is not related to either of them, but is believed to be a distant cousin of a certain Jerry the Mouse, who has no super powers at all but is still active in the cat teasing business after a long and distinguished career.

*****

Thanks a lot!!! I was bored so I went to my local newsstand and I saw a new Charlton comic, so I picked it up and looked at the title, Charlton Bullseye. I remembered a fanzine by that title in 1975.

The story was great! Everything was superb! I sure hope my letter gets printed!

Oh, something else! Why not open a subscription department!! Well, why not?!?

Can't wait until the next issue!

Doug E. Ford
Miami, FL

P.S. As you can see I'm a little excited!!

Subscriptions are for sissies! Go to your local comics shop and fight for your copy like everybody else!!

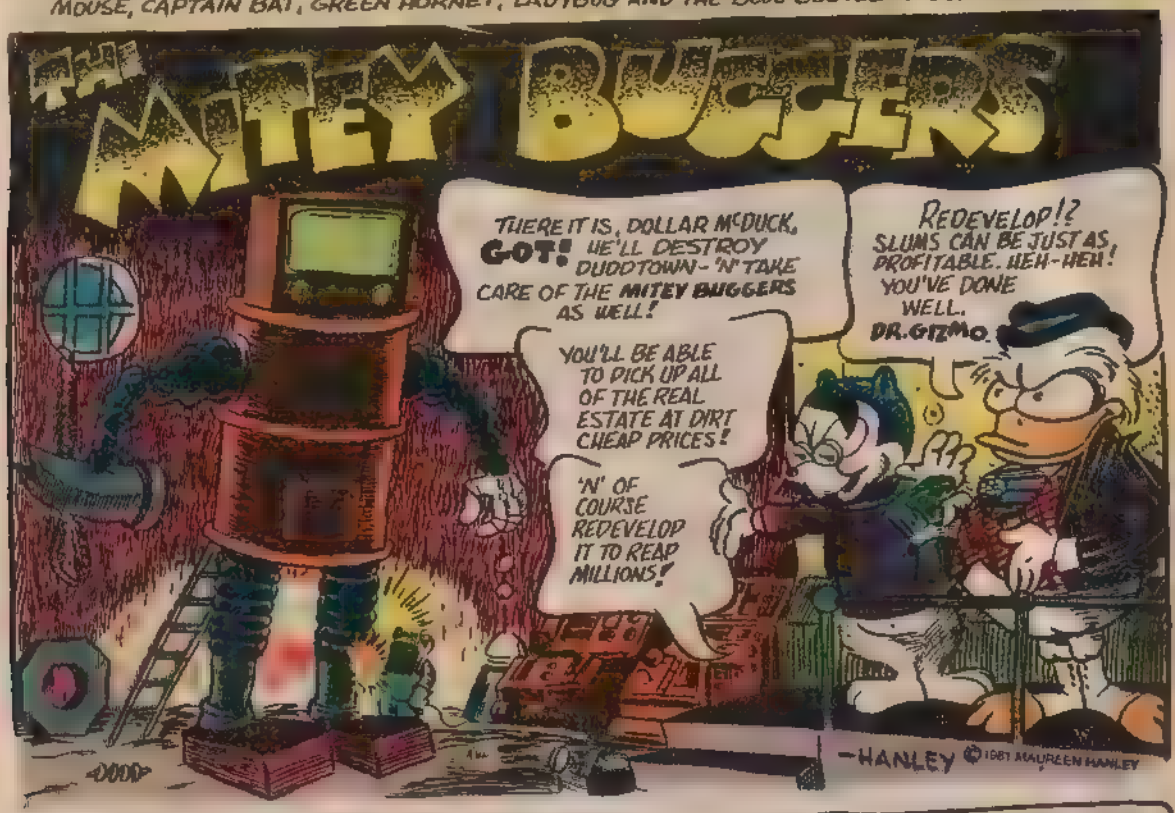
*****

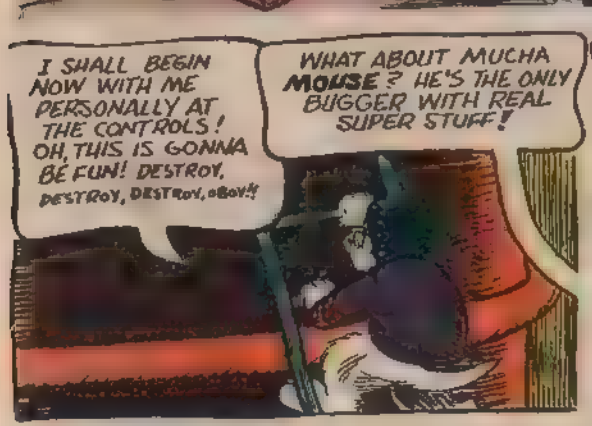
This issue's wiseguy answers by assistant editor Bill Pearson. Address your letters to:

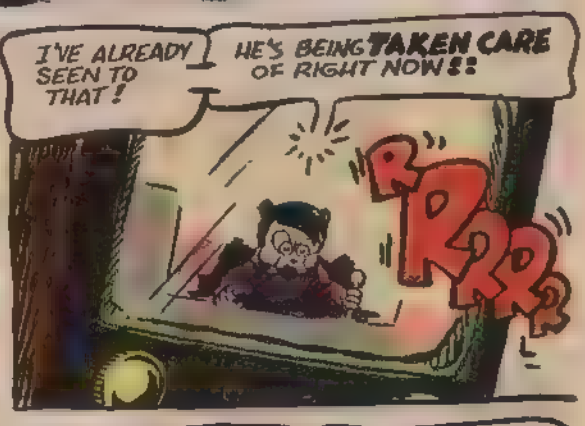
Charlton Comics
Derby, CT 06418

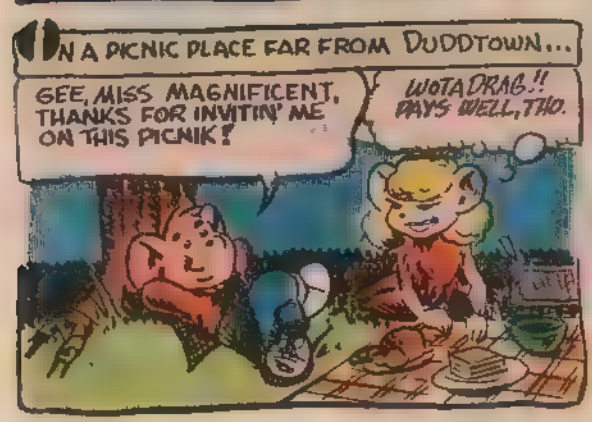
And please type them, if possible, double-spaced. Give our typesetters a break!

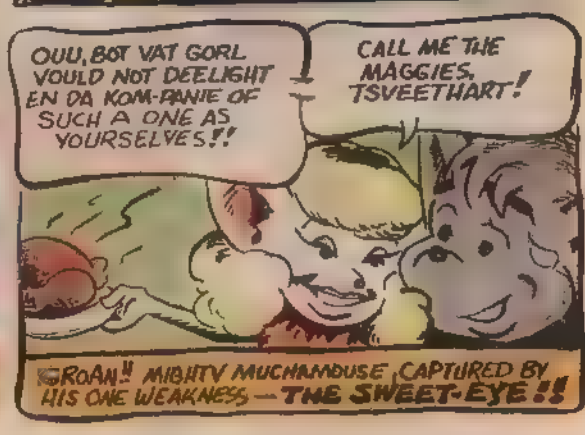
FUNNY ANIMAL DEPT. ALRIGHT, ALL YOU FOLKS THAT DIG THOSE SUPERGUYS THAT LIKE TO BECOME HALF-ANIMAL (BAT-SPIDER-HAWK-CANARY-ETC.), LET'S HEAR IT FOR MUCHA MOUSE, CAPTAIN BAT, GREEN HORNET, LADYBUG AND THE BLUE BEETLE KNOWN AS THE...


THE MITEY BUGGERS
THERE IT IS, DOLLAR McDUCK, GOT! WE'LL DESTROY DUDDTOWN-'N' TAKE CARE OF THE MITEY BUGGERS AS WELL!
REDEVELOP!? SLUMS CAN BE JUST AS PROFITABLE. HEH-HEH! YOU'VE DONE WELL. DR. GIZMO
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PICK UP ALL OF THE REAL ESTATE AT DIRT CHEAP PRICES!
'N' OF COURSE REDEVELOP IT TO REAP MILLIONS!
-HANLEY ©1981 MAUREEN HANLEY

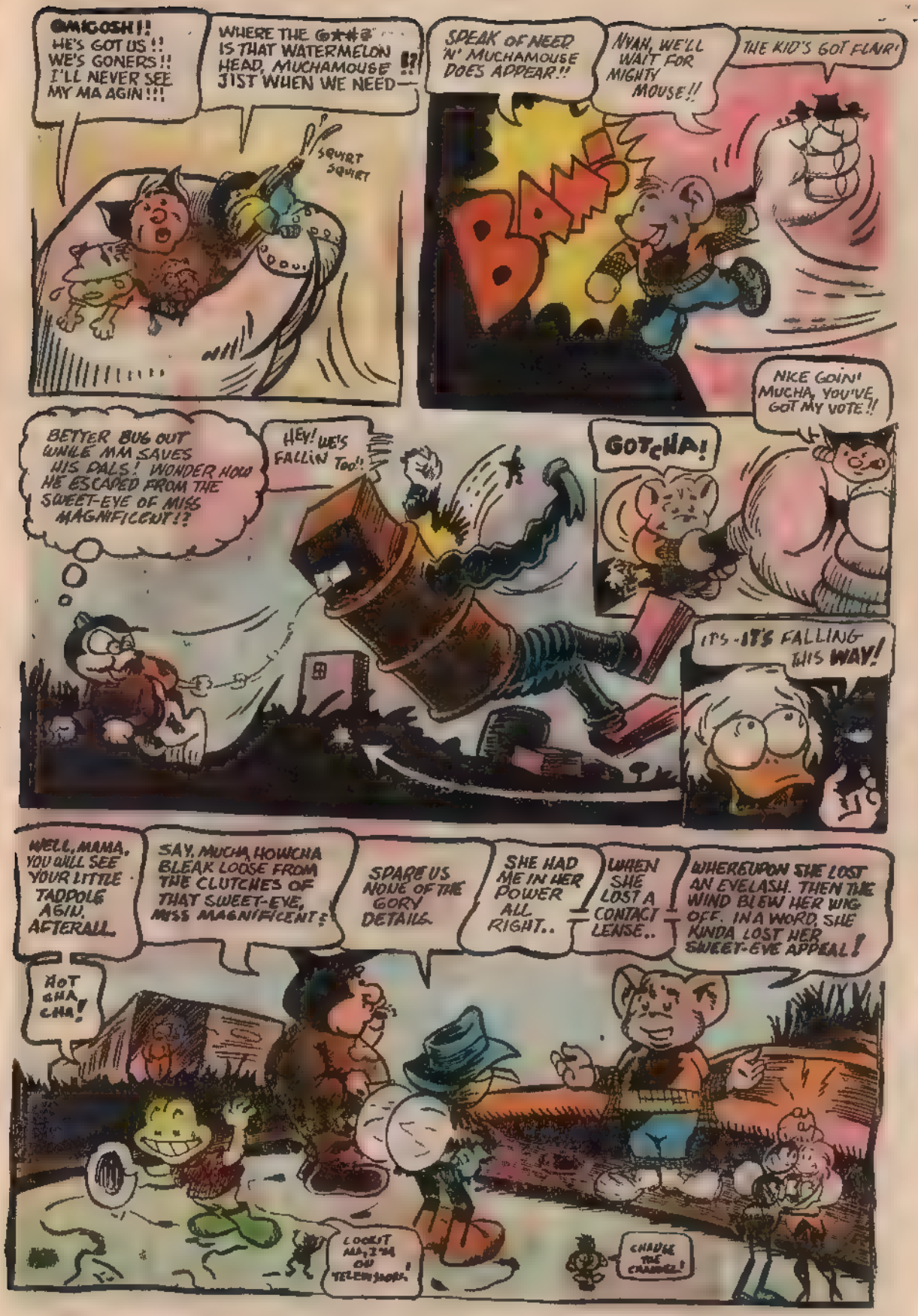

I SHALL BEGIN NOW WITH ME PERSONALLY AT THE CONTROLS! OH, THIS IS GONNA BE FUN! DESTROY, DESTROY, DESTROY, oBOY!!
WHAT ABOUT MUCHA MOUSE? HE'S THE ONLY BUGGER WITH REAL SUPER STUFF!






OUU, BOT VAT GORL VOULD NOT DEELIGHT EN DA KOM-PANIE OF SUCH A ONE AS YOURSELVES!!
CALL ME THE MAGGIES, TSVEETHART!
ROAN!! MIGHTY MUCHAMOUSE, CAPTURED BY HIS ONE WEAKNESS—THE SWEET-EYE!!

AND AT THE HINDQUARTERS OF THE MITEY BUGGERS..
PEACE 'N' QUIET DOTH REIGN IN DUDDTOWN!
EH GUYS?
THANKS TO US HARD WORKIN' FOOLS!
WHERE'S THE MOUSE MARVEL?
WILL YOU GUYS LISTEN TO ME!?
SPIT IT OUT, M'BOY!
OUT GAL-LAVANTING!
I REPRESENT A LARGE EASTERN PUBLISHING FIRM THAT WOULD LIKE TO TAKE OVER THE PRINTING OF YOUR ADVENTURES THERES GOOD MONEY IN IT BUT YOU GOTTA GIVE US TOTAL REWRITE RIGHTS!
SOUNDS GREAT!! WOTZ REWRITE WRITES?
WELL, REALLY, IT MEANS WE BEEF UP THE YARNS WITH SADISTIC VIOLENCE AND LURID SEX!
SOUNDS GREAT! WOTZ SEX?
I RESENT THAT REMARK! I THINK WE GOT AS MUCH LURID SEX AS ANYBODY!!!
QUIET, LADYBUG!...
THERE THEY ARE!
LOOKITDAT!
WOT DA-?
OY!
HOLY HANNA BANNANA
YAAa
TV IS GETTIN' TOO VIOLENT!!
WHAT THE HECK'S GOIN' ON OUT HERE!? CAN'T A BOOY READ HIS PAPER IN PEACE NO MOREEEE!!
HUP!
YIPE
TIME TO ROUND UP THE BUGGERS!!
NOT FAR FROM THE SLEVE..
WONDERFUL! THIS DEAL WILL PUSH ME INTO THE BILLIONAIRE CLASS. HEH!!


OMIGOSH!! HE'S GOT US!! WE'S GONERS!! I'LL NEVER SEE MY MA AGIN!!!
WHERE THE @*#@ IS THAT WATERMELON HEAD, MUCHAMOUSE !?! JIST WHEN WE NEED—
SQUIRT SQUIRT
SPEAK OF NEED 'N' MUCHAMOUSE DOES APPEAR!!
NYAH, WE'LL WAIT FOR MIGHTY MOUSE!!
THE KID'S GOT FLAIR!
BAM!
NICE GOIN! MUCHA, YOU'VE GOT MY VOTE!!
BETTER BUG OUT WHILE MM SAVES HIS PALS! WONDER HOW HE ESCAPED FROM THE SWEET-EYE OF MISS MAGNIFICENT!?
HEY! HE'S FALLIN TOO!
GOTCHA!
IT'S-IT'S FALLING THIS WAY!
WELL, MAMA, YOU WILL SEE YOUR LITTLE TADPOLE AGIN, AFTERALL.
SAY, MUCHA, HOWCHA BLEAK LOOSE FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THAT SWEET-EYE, MISS MAGNIFICENT?
SPARE US NONE OF THE GORY DETAILS.
SHE HAD ME IN HER POWER ALL RIGHT..
WHEN SHE LOST A CONTACT LENSE..
WHEREUPON SHE LOST AN EYELASH. THEN THE WIND BLEW HER WIG OFF. IN A WORD, SHE KINDA LOST HER SWEET-EYE APPEAL!
HOT CHA CHA!
LOOKIT MA, I'M ON TELEVISION!
CHANGE THE CHANNEL!

Terry Turtle

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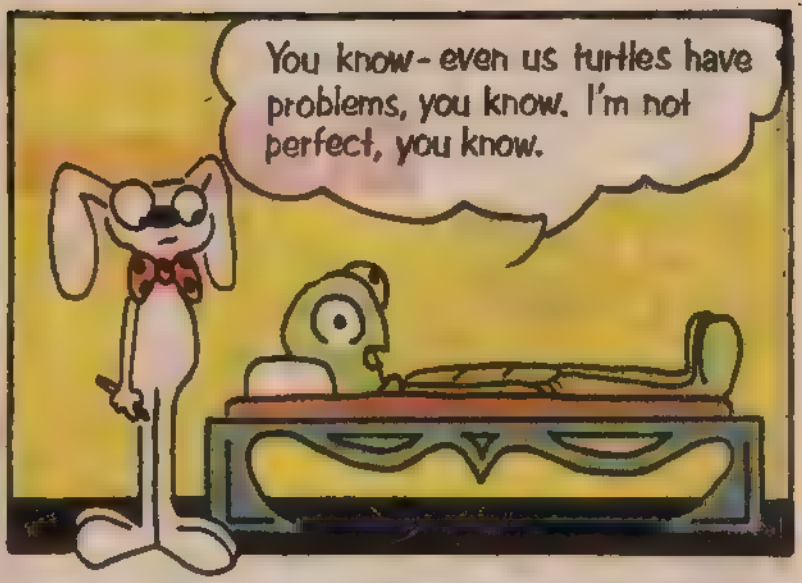
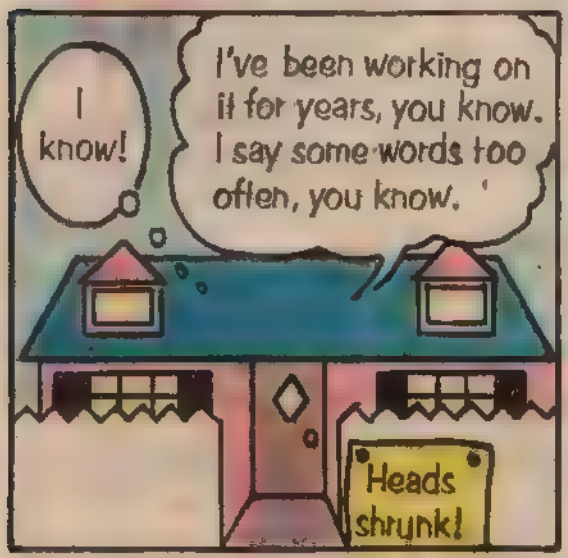
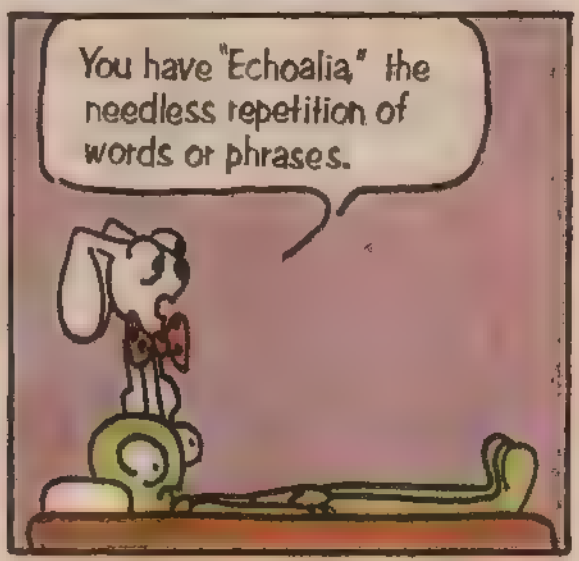
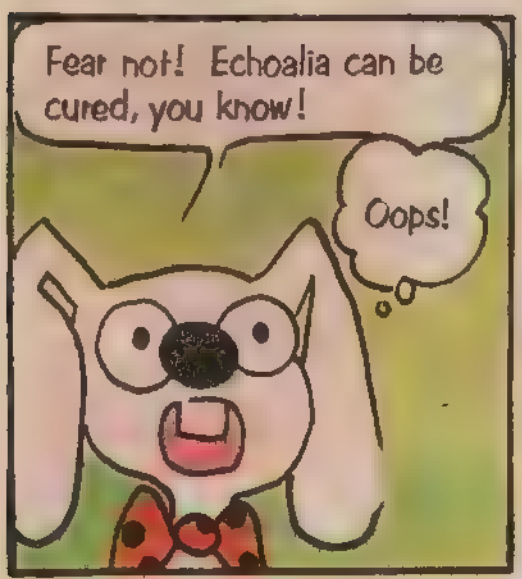


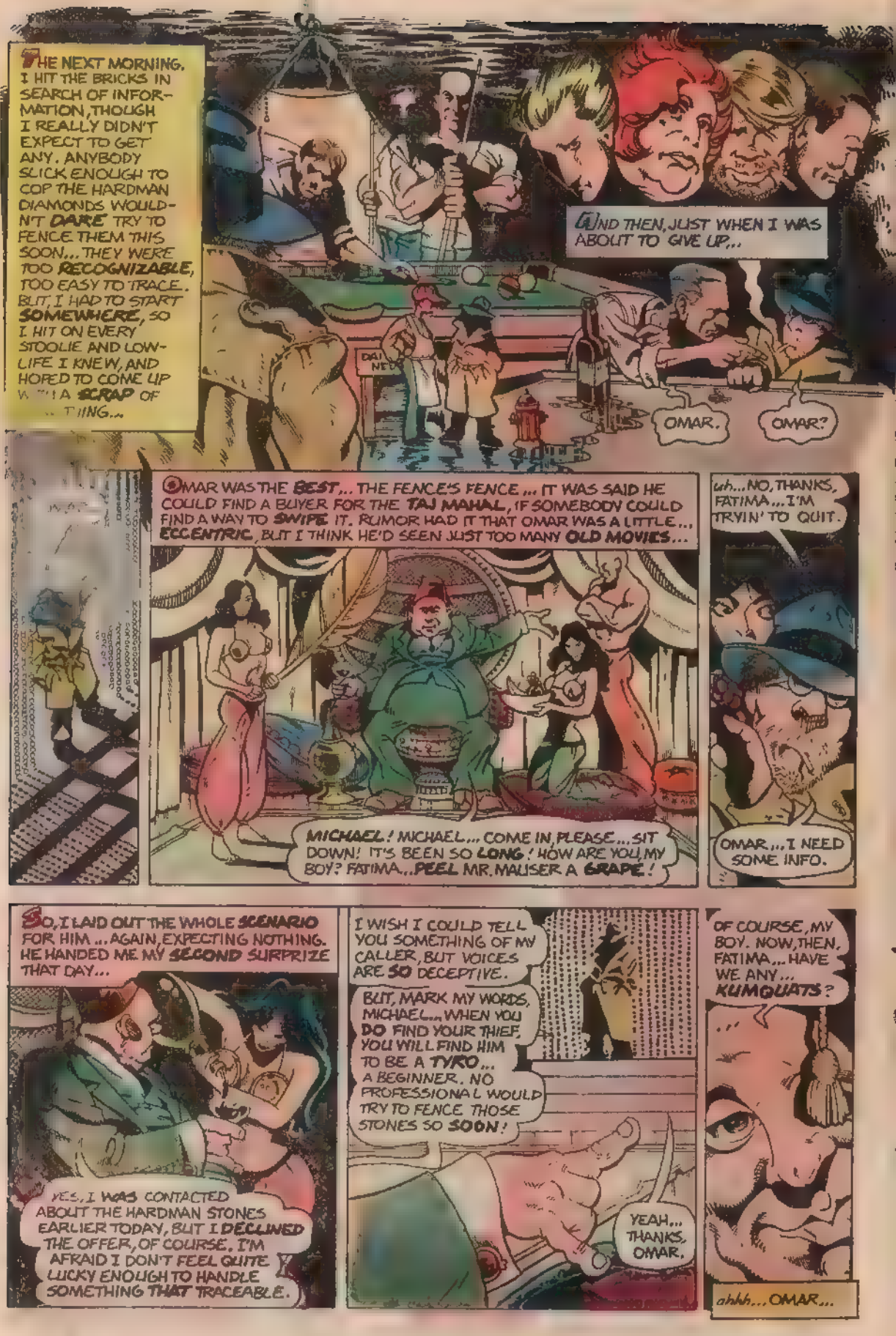






michael MALUSER private eye
STORY AND ART: RICK BURCHETT
COLORS: WENDY FIORE
MY NAME IS MALUSER. THAT'S ALSO THE NAME OF MY PISTOL. IN MY PROFESSION, IT'S THE ONLY RELIABLE FRIEND I HAVE. I'M A PRIVATE EYE AND THIS IS MY STORY...
THE JOB WAS EASY ENOUGH. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS PLAY WATCHDOG TO A SET OF SPARKLERS HUNG AROUND A LADY'S NECK. IT WAS A BLACK TIE AFFAIR, SO I RENTED A TUX. I FELT LIKE A WRINKLED PENGUIN, BUT MY HOSTESS WAS ANYTHING BUT. SHE WAS MRS. EVELYN HARDMAN; THE SPARKLERS WERE SEVEN PERFECTLY MATCHED BLUE DIAMONDS. BOTH... BEAUTIFUL.
MR. MALUSER, THIS IS MY HUSBAND, GENERAL ALEXANDER HARDMAN.
GENERAL...?
YES... UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED.
"BLUE ICE"
AND THIS IS MY HUSBAND'S FORMER AIDE AND OUR FRIEND, CAPTAIN DAN PENNING.
MALUSER...
THERE WAS MORE BRASS AT THIS SHINDIG THAN AT A CONVENTION OF CUSPIDOR COLLECTORS.
MR. MALUSER... DOES YOUR PROTECTION SERVICE INCLUDE ACCOMPANYING ME TO THE POWDER ROOM?
uh... NO, BUT I WILL WAIT OUTSIDE THE DOOR AND KEEP WATCH.
I HAD TO WONDER WHAT A SWELL DAME LIKE MRS. HARDMAN WAS DOING MARRIED TO AN OLD GEEZER LIKE THE GENERAL. AH WELL, THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE... YOU CAN QUOTE ME...

MRS. HARDMAN!
ugh- PANTS! SHE'S GOT IT LOCKED!
EEEEEEEEEEE
WHAT--
A-A MAN! HE WAS WAITING... TOOK MY NECKLACE ... RAN OUT TO THE BALCONY...
NO SIGN OF HIM!
I FIGURED HE WOULD BE LONG GONE THIS ONE WAS SLICK... HE KNEW EXACTLY WHERE TO WAIT BUT, ONE THING BOTHERED ME. THE GROUND UNDER THE BALCONY WAS UNTOUCHED IT HAD RAINED THAT AFTERNOON, SO THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOOTPRINTS ...THERE WEREN'T. THE GRASS WASN'T EVEN BENT...
WAIT.. A.. MINUTE! WHAT IF .. YEAH THAT'S IT! HE PROBABLY HAD A GRAPPLING HOOK AND LINE WAITING FOR HIM! UP THE ROPE, AND OVER THE ROOF!
MAUSER! THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
TELL ME ABOUT IT!
LISTEN, WISE-GUY! WE'RE PAYING YOU GOOD MONEY TO PROTECT THAT NECKLACE, AND IT'S TAKEN RIGHT FROM UNDER YOUR NOSE!
I HAD TO DO SOMETHING, RIGHT THEN I WAS FEELING LOWER THAN A MIDGET IN A MINE SHAFT...
YOU'LL GET THE NECKLACE BACK.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.


THE NEXT MORNING, I HIT THE BRICKS IN SEARCH OF INFORMATION, THOUGH I REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET ANY. ANYBODY SLICK ENOUGH TO COP THE HARDMAN DIAMONDS WOULDN'T DARE TRY TO FENCE THEM THIS SOON... THEY WERE TOO RECOGNIZABLE, TOO EASY TO TRACE. BUT, I HAD TO START SOMEWHERE, SO I HIT ON EVERY STOOLIE AND LOWLIFE I KNEW, AND HOPED TO COME UP W... A SCRAP OF ... THING...
AND THEN, JUST WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO GIVE UP...
OMAR.
OMAR?
OMAR WAS THE BEST... THE FENCE'S FENCE... IT WAS SAID HE COULD FIND A BUYER FOR THE TAJ MAHAL, IF SOMEBODY COULD FIND A WAY TO SWIPE IT. RUMOR HAD IT THAT OMAR WAS A LITTLE... ECCENTRIC, BUT I THINK HE'D SEEN JUST TOO MANY OLD MOVIES...
MICHAEL! MICHAEL... COME IN, PLEASE... SIT DOWN! IT'S BEEN SO LONG! HOW ARE YOU, MY BOY? FATIMA... PEEL MR. MAUSER A GRAPE!
uh... NO, THANKS, FATIMA... I'M TRYIN' TO QUIT.
OMAR... I NEED SOME INFO.
SO, I LAID OUT THE WHOLE SCENARIO FOR HIM... AGAIN, EXPECTING NOTHING. HE HANDED ME MY SECOND SURPRIZE THAT DAY...
YES, I WAS CONTACTED ABOUT THE HARDMAN STONES EARLIER TODAY, BUT I DECLINED THE OFFER, OF COURSE. I'M AFRAID I DON'T FEEL QUITE LUCKY ENOUGH TO HANDLE SOMETHING THAT TRACEABLE.
I WISH I COULD TELL YOU SOMETHING OF MY CALLER, BUT VOICES ARE SO DECEPTIVE.
BUT, MARK MY WORDS, MICHAEL... WHEN YOU DO FIND YOUR THIEF, YOU WILL FIND HIM TO BE A TYRO... A BEGINNER. NO PROFESSIONAL WOULD TRY TO FENCE THOSE STONES SO SOON!
YEAH... THANKS, OMAR.
OF COURSE, MY BOY. NOW, THEN, FATIMA... HAVE WE ANY... KUMQUATS?
ahhh... OMAR...

MY NEXT STOP WAS POLICE HEADQUARTERS

YEAH, MIKE... THE LAB BOYS DID CHECK YOUR THEORY ABOUT THE ROOFTOP ESCAPE...

THEY DIDN'T FIND A THING.

LIEUTENANT BILL DOYAL, AT THE 13TH PRECINCT, WAS, AND STILL IS, MY CLOSEST FRIEND (EVEN IF HE WON'T ADMIT IT). SO, I KNEW I COULD PUMP HIM FOR INFO...

THEY CHECKED IT GOOD, HUH?

MIKE... WITH A FINE-TOOTH COMB! OH, AND THEY ASKED ME TO TELL YOU... *NEXT* TIME, REMEMBER... THEY'RE SCIENTISTS... NOT ACROBATS!

SO... THERE WERE TWO POSSIBLE ESCAPE ROUTES, AND THE BURGLAR DIDN'T USE EITHER ONE.

hmmm

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER...

THINGS WERE MAKING ABOUT AS MUCH SENSE AS A *SCREEN DOOR* IN A *SUBMARINE*. I FIGURED THE BEST THING TO DO WOULD BE TO RETURN TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME. SO, THAT NIGHT, I WENT BACK TO THE HARDMAN MANSION FOR SOME AFTER HOURS POKING AROUND...

I FINALLY FOUND A WINDOW I COULD PRY OPEN WITHOUT BREAKING ANYTHING...

THIS LOOKS LIKE THE GENERAL'S STUDY. MAY AS WELL START HERE.

JUST THE USUAL DESK STUFF... ENVELOPES... PAPER... SCISSORS... GLUE... GUESS I'LL NOSE AROUND SOMEWHERE ELSE.

THEN, SOMETHING WINKED AT ME FROM THE CARPET... SOMETHING... THAT DIDN'T BELONG...

WHAT'S THIS?

IT WAS A NEATLY CUT PIECE OF NEWSPRINT. AND ON IT WAS THE LETTER 'R'... AS IN RED... OR RAIN...

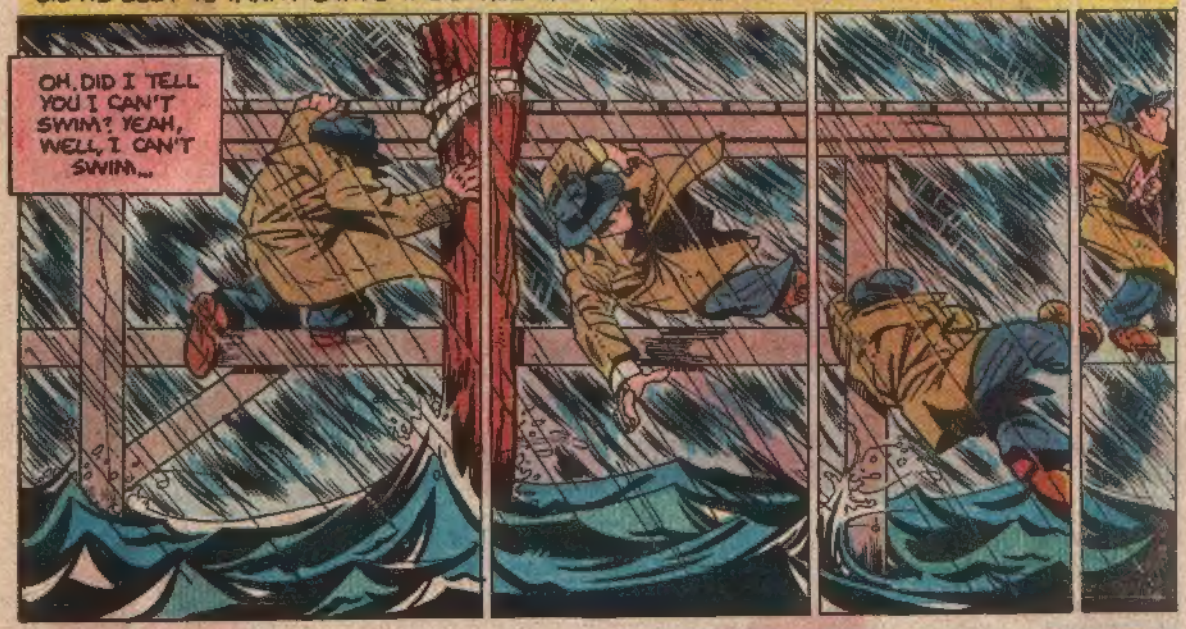
R

'R'... AS IN... *RANSOM!*

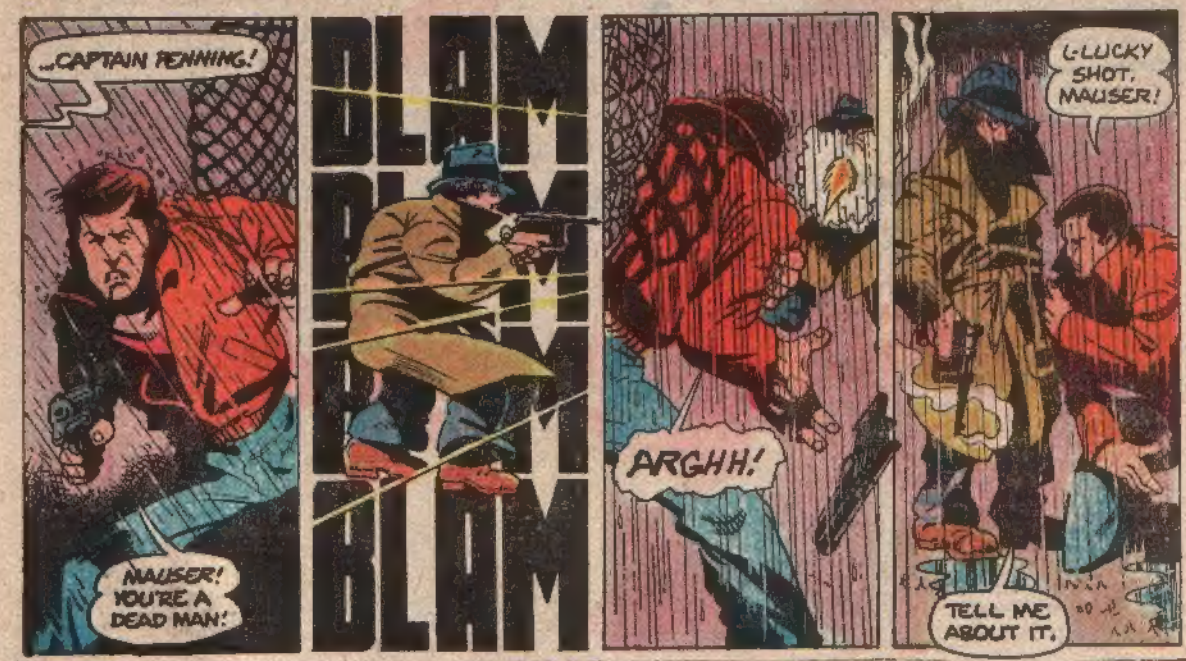
THE TRASH HADN'T BEEN EMPTIED. SO, ON A LONG SHOT, I DECIDED TO CHECK IT...
Well... WHADDAYA KNOW... NEWSPAPERS THAT HAVE BEEN CUT UP! I WON— WHAZZAT!?
I COULD'VE SWORN I HEARD SOMEONE IN HERE...
ALEX...? ALEX, IS THAT YOU? HELLO... ALEX?
WHEW!
I SPENT THE REST OF THE NIGHT PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER. THE NEXT MORNING IT STILL DIDN'T MAKE SENSE SO IT WAS TIME FOR ONE OF MY FAMOUS HALF-BRAINED PLANS...
MY SECRETARY, ROSIE REDD, IS A REAL GEM. SHE CAN'T TYPE TOO GOOD, AND HER COFFEE'S HORRIBLE, BUT SHE USUALLY GOES ALONG WITH MY SCREWY SCHEMES...
HELLO--
LISTEN... WE'VE GIVEN YOU ENOUGH TIME! BE ON PIER SIX TONIGHT AT 11:30 AND BRING THE MONEY!
HOW'D I DO?
SWELL! NOW IT'S MY TURN!
YOU WANT ME TO WHAT?
CALL THE NUMBER ON THAT PAPER AND WHEN THE WOMAN ANSWERS, TELL HER WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN!
HELLO, GENERAL HARDMAN? THIS IS MAUSER... I'VE RUN DOWN THE NECKLACE. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET THE WOMAN TONIGHT... YEAH, A WOMAN... ANYWAY, BE ON PIER SIX AT 11:46... COME ALONE, AND DON'T TELL ANYONE, NOT EVEN YOUR WIFE... RIGHT... 'BYE!
WHAT NOW, MIKE?
NOW, I REST! IT'S GONNA BE A LONG NIGHT!

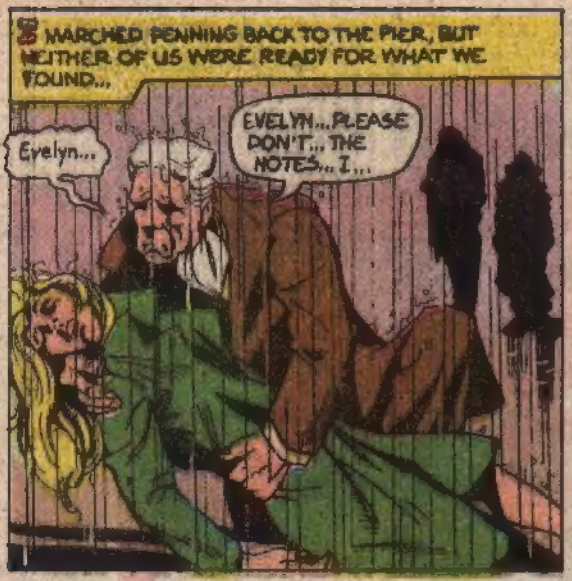
THERE WAS A STORM BOILING UP OFF SHORE THAT NIGHT, AS IF MOTHER NATURE KNEW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN. I GOT TO PIER SIX EARLY, AND WATCHED AS THE WOMAN ARRIVED.....
PIER 6
THE CURTAIN WAS ABOUT TO GO UP ON THE LAST ACT OF OUR LITTLE PLAY...
EVELYN!
ALEXANDER!
DON'TCHA JUST LOVE SURPRIZES?
MAUSER!?
THERE'D BETTER BE A DARN GOOD EXPLANATION FOR THIS!
Hmm...starting to rain... I KEEP TELLING MYSELF THERE IS. OKAY... HOW ABOUT THIS... ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A ROBBERY...
ONLY IT WASN'T REALLY A ROBBERY. A LADY NEEDED SOME QUICK CASH, SO SHE DECIDED TO FAKE A SNATCH AND FENCE THE SUPPOSEDLY STOLEN GOODS. AND WHY DID SHE NEED THE CASH?
BECAUSE, OUR FAIR DAMSEL WAS BEING BLACK-MAILED! BUT... AND THIS IS THE TRICKY PART... SHE WASN'T REALLY BEING BLACKMAILED!
THEN, AS IF ON CUE, BOTH THE STORM AND A HIDDEN GUN STARTED BLASTING US!
HIT THE DECK!

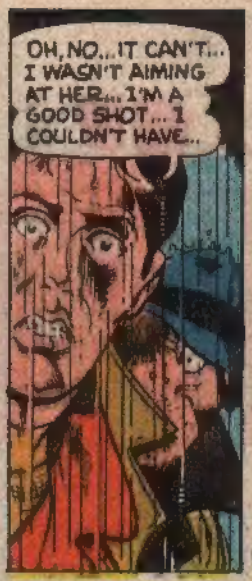
WE WERE SITTING DUCKS ON THE PIER. THE ONLY WAY OUT WAS FOR ME TO GO OVER THE SIDE, CRAWL ALONG THE PIER TO THE THE DOCK, AND WORK MY WAY BEHIND THE GUNMAN. THE STORM DID ITS BEST TO YANK ME INTO THE BAY... I WAS A FLY RIDING THE BLADE OF AN ELECTRIC FAN...



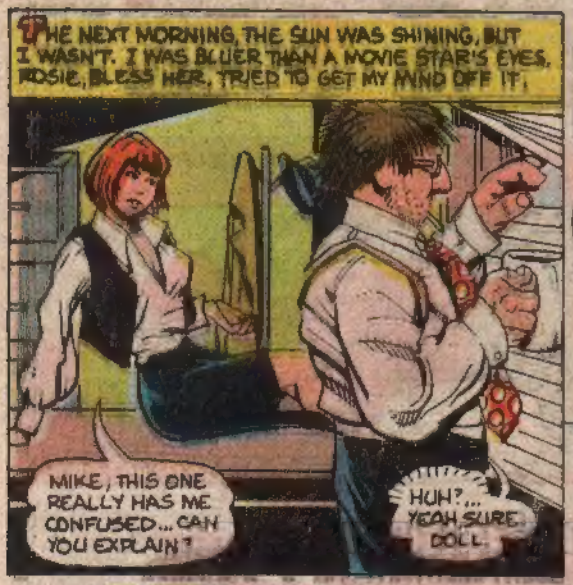
IT ONLY TOOK ME ABOUT TEN YEARS TO REACH THE DOCK AND I GUESS THE STORM HELPED TO HIDE ME FROM THE TORPEDO... HE WAS STILL TRYING TO PICK OUT TARGETS ON THE PIER...



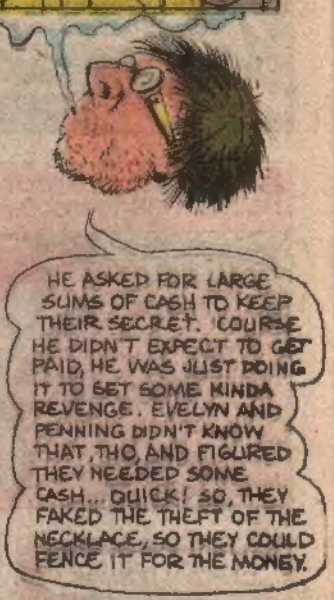

I MARCHED PENNING BACK TO THE PIER, BUT NEITHER OF US WERE READY FOR WHAT WE FOUND...
Evelyn...
EVELYN... PLEASE DON'T... THE NOTES... I...


OH, NO... IT CAN'T... I WASN'T AIMING AT HER... I'M A GOOD SHOT... I COULDN'T HAVE...

She's gone...
AW, NUTS!


THE NEXT MORNING, THE SUN WAS SHINING, BUT I WASN'T. I WAS BLUER THAN A MOVIE STAR'S EYES. ROSIE, BLESS HER, TRIED TO GET MY MIND OFF IT.
MIKE, THIS ONE REALLY HAS ME CONFUSED... CAN YOU EXPLAIN?
HUH?... YEAH, SURE, DOLL.

LESSEE... EVELYN HARDMAN AND DAN PENNING WERE MORE THAN JUST FRIENDS. GENERAL HARDMAN FOUND OUT, AND IT BROKE HIS BRASS-PLATED HEART! TO GET EVEN, HE SENT THEM ANONYMOUS BLACKMAIL NOTES!


HE ASKED FOR LARGE SUMS OF CASH TO KEEP THEIR SECRET. 'COURSE HE DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET PAID, HE WAS JUST DOING IT TO GET SOME KINDA REVENGE. EVELYN AND PENNING DIDN'T KNOW THAT, THO, AND FIGURED THEY NEEDED SOME CASH... QUICK! SO, THEY FAKED THE THEFT OF THE NECKLACE, SO THEY COULD FENCE IT FOR THE MONEY.

SO, THERE WAS NO THEFT AND THERE REALLY WASN'T ANY BLACKMAIL. WHEN I FINALLY SORTED THINGS OUT, I ARRANGED THE MEETING ON THE PIER TO BRINGS THINGS TO A HEAD. I FIGURED PENNING WOULD BE THERE SOMEWHERE, BUT I DIDN'T PLAN ON HIM DOING...

SO, HOW DID YOU PUT IT ALL TOGETHER?
WELL, DOLL, WHEN YOU BEEN IN THIS BUSINESS AS LONG AS I HAVE, YOU DEVELOP A SIXTH SENSE ABOUT THESE THINGS. YOU GOTTA...

YOU GUESSED, HUH?
YUP!
-END-